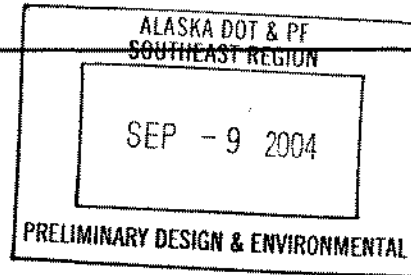




Sitka Conservation Society
Box 6533
Sitka, Alaska
99835
(907) 747-7509
info@sitkawild.org

*"Working to protect
the natural
environment
of the Tongass,
and Sitka's quality
of life - Since 1967"*

Roger Healy
DOT&PF Southeast Region
6860 Glacier Highway
Juneau, AK 99801



September 7, 2004

Comments on the Gravina Access Project

The following are the official comments of the Sitka Conservation Society (SCS) regarding the Gravina Access Project FEIS. Because we have chosen to only address some of our many concerns regarding this project, we hereby incorporate comments submitted by the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council and the Tongass Conservation Society.

Summary

Sitka Conservation Society is wholly opposed to the Gravina Bridge Project, and request that the plan be withdrawn for the below reasons.

The Purpose and Need of the project is unduly restrictive

The purpose and need of the Gravina Access Project is "to improve *surface* transportation between Revillagigedo (Revilla) Island and Gravina Island". (Emphasis added). In reality, the issue for the large majority of Ketchikan residents is not about access to Gravina Island, but about getting to the airport with minimum effort and cost. By limiting the project scope to improving surface transportation, the FEIS eliminates the ability to look at alternative forms of transportation including the easiest one of upgrading existing ferry service between the airport and Ketchikan.

Currently, users of Ketchikan airport use one of two ferries that make the quick and easy 7-minute trip from the city to the airport. The city also maintains a third ferry as backup transportation. The ferries make one round trip every 15 minutes in the summer, and every half hour in the winter.

If the purpose of the Gravina Project is to transport people to and from the airport efficiently, then we suggest an alternative that maintains the ferry system and increases easy of which passengers transport their belonging from the airport to the ferry. For example, free luggage carts can be purchased or a luggage belt built that would be far less expensive than the bridge and help resolve issues with the current design.

We are concerned that the Bridge will only further exacerbate problems of transportation between the airport and town. The bridge crossing point is not central to Ketchikan's population center, and will lengthen airport commute times for many residents. Traffic will be routed through the already congested downtown core, which supports heavy foot traffic during summer months. Further, the bridge hurts users of the airport who do not have a vehicle. It is approximately a 35-minute taxi ride to the airport, a far more expensive option than the current ferry system. This Bridge is a traffic problem and potential hazard, not a solution. There are much simpler and cheaper ways to make airport travel more convenient.

The FEIS fails to disclose the Gravina Project will cost taxpayers millions

SCS has great concerns that the Gravina Bridge is a huge waste of taxpayer dollars. At \$190 million, the mile-long, two-section bridge will cost \$15,833 of public money per Ketchikan resident. (It should be noted that we believe many costs associated with bridge construction were not included in the \$190 million assessment and therefore the taxpayer loss is even larger). Since the proposed project would include a low bridge between Ketchikan and Pennock Island, and then continue across a high bridge from Pennock Island to Gravina Island, additional road construction will be necessary to reach the airport from the bridge landing. Taxpayers will also bear the burden of this additional cost. There are other additional costs likely to be born by the taxpayer as well as neither the Ketchikan nor the State of Alaska has the funds for items such as bridge maintenance and the construction of a parking facility that will likely be needed at the airport to accommodate traffic resulting from the bridge. The FEIS fails to disclose these hidden costs and that taxpayers are the ones to foot the bill for this project.

The FEIS fails to take a hard look at the cumulative impacts of this Project

SCS is very concerned about the relationship between the Gravina Access Project, the Gravina Timber sale and other planned logging activity on the island. Clearly, the construction of the bridge is the first step to a larger master plan to develop large portions of Gravina Island for timber operations, yet the FEIS fails to take a hard-look at the cumulative impacts of these projects. The approval of the Gravina Bridge is the Gateway to all other planned development on the island.

Impacts to the Gravina Roadless Area

SCS has been advocating for a number of years that all roadless areas of the Tongass National Forest be protected from any logging or road construction. One of the most valued roadless areas in the Tongass is the Gravina Roadless Area. The US Forest Service just recently approved a plan to log almost forty million board feet of trees from this pristine area and construct more than 20 miles of new road. The construction of these

roads has been directly tied to the construction of the Gravina Bridge project. The Gravina Timber Sale has drawn national attention, with over 8,000 people from Alaska and around the country, requesting the Forest Service not to build roads and log this important roadless area. In addition, the nearby Native villages of Saxman and Metlakatla strongly oppose the timber sale because it will disrupt their traditional, cultural and subsistence uses of the island.

Impacts to Wildlife

We are very concerned about the cumulative impacts of this project and related development on wildlife and in turn the people who use the island for subsistence purposes. The island is a popular hunting and trapping place for area residents. Over 96% of the Metlakatla and Saxman residents get food from Gravina, and the island's resources are vital to the communities' economic and cultural health. Alaska's Department of Fish and Game rated Gravina Island subsistence activities as "most sensitive to disturbance". Currently, most hunting is done via the shore, leaving the middle of the island as a wildlife refuge of sorts from hunters. Contractors for the Access Project determined that the bridge onto the island would allow motorized access into the heart of the island's roadless area, thereby likely increasing hunting pressure and the risk of wildlife mortality due to collision.

The combined impact of the bridge and expected logging will also destroy and fragment important wildlife habitat for species such as deer, bear, wolf, goshawks and small mammals. In addition, the loss of migration or travel corridors used by many of these species for movement between low and high elevations and across the island will be lost.

Impacts to wetlands and the aquatic environment

In addition to the loss of valuable forest habitat on the Island, the bridge would directly impact over 86 acres of wetlands with 1,734,900 cubic meters of fill, and affect 1.22 acres of essential fish habitat. In addition, the Gravina Bridge poses risks to the water of Tongass Narrows and the marine life its supports. The Narrows currently contain an impaired waterbody leading to currently negotiations between the EPA and local seafood processors over activities that compromise water quality in the Narrows. In addition the EPA is closely monitoring other pollution sources in hopes of rehabilitating the impaired waters. This project will only exacerbate concerns about water quality by increasing non-point source pollution from surface traffic and the risk of large-scale marine pollution from a boat accident or grounding.

Lastly, project contractors failed to include water quality baseline studies and monitoring in the cost-benefit analyses, and have not budgeted to mitigate water pollution from cruise ship groundings or other marine accidents or accidents caused while traveling on the bridge.

The Bridge poses risks to human safety and the environment

We are very concerned about the navigational hazards the Gravina Bridge will pose. One particular concern surrounds cruiseships having to make risky maneuvers to reach the city docks, increasing the chance for an accident. Such accidents obviously pose risks for human injury as well as risks for marine pollution. The design of the bridge will force ships to thread both ways through a narrow, tide-whipped passage with rocks near the water surface – a route which ships masters and captains say is too dangerous for use. North-bound ships will have it even more difficult – having to turn in the middle of Tongass Narrows, through cruise ships, personal boat, ferry, and float plane traffic to reach the dock. Based on Coast Guard-approved maneuvering simulations, one in 60 cruise ships is expected to run aground annually in these conditions. Such groundings place thousands of cruiseship passengers and other vessel users at immediate risk and pose additional risks to other boats in the vicinity.

SCS is also concerned about the increased risk of surface accidents associated with the bridge. Given the foggy, heavy rain and icy conditions that are frequent to Ketchikan throughout much of the year, it is very likely numerous accidents will occur on the bridge. However, key commuter safety risk evaluations, required for federally funded highway projects, have not been done for this bridge making it impossible to determine the extent of the risk.

Conclusion

For all the reasons stated above, and because Gravina Bridge is the gateway to industrial development of the largely pristine Gravina Island, while not properly addressing other alternative transportation methods, we strongly oppose the construction of the Gravina Access Bridge. Thank you for the opportunity to comment and please keep us updated on future developments related to this project.

Sincerely,



Kenyon Fields
Executive Director, Sitka Conservation Society

709 W. 9th Street, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668
Telephone: (907) 586-7636 Fax: (907) 586-7358

**National Marine
Fisheries Service
Habitat Conservation**

Fax

To: Jim Evenson ADOT&PF From: R. Miller NOAA Habitat Conservation
Fax: 907-586-4414 Pages: 3
Phone: _____ Date: 9/17/04
Re: _____ CC: _____

☐ Urgent

☐ For Review

☐ Please Comment

☐ Please Reply

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• Comments:

DRAFT NMFS comments on GRADINA Accruals
FEIS. Final comments will come from
NMFS! HQ office in DC



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service
P.O. Box 21668
Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

DRAFT

September 7, 2004

Jim Evensen, P.E.
Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF)
7860 Glacier Highway
Juneau, AK 99801-7999

RE: Gravina Access FEIS

Dear Mr. Evensen:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has reviewed the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Gravina Access Project. The purpose of the project is to improve surface transportation between Revillagigedo Island and Gravina Island in the Ketchikan Gateway Borough, Alaska. The FEIS evaluates six bridge alternatives and three ferry alternatives. All alternatives include a roadway around the southern end of the airport runway connecting the airport terminal to a spine road on the west side of the airport. The preferred alternative would be a bridge between Tongass Avenue and the airport via Pennock Island.

NMFS submitted comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) in October 2003, and has participated in several calls and email exchanges with the contractors on the project. In March 2004, NMFS received a letter responding to NMFS' comments. The changes in the FEIS have addressed nearly all of NMFS' concerns with regard to potential adverse impacts to Essential Fish Habitat. For NMFS to conclude that the FEIS adequately protects EFH, the following comments/questions should be addressed:

- In the March 2004 response to NMFS' comments, Item 21, it states "All eight build alternatives will require fill in the edge of the lowermost segment of Government Creek estuary." As far as we can determine, this fill is not addressed anywhere in the FEIS. We assume that this fill is associated with the road, which is a component of all alternatives, but it does not appear to have been included in the evaluation of the impacts to EFH. On Figure 3.16, this area is identified as Intertidal Marsh or Meadow; however Table 4-11 indicates that Alternative F1 will not impact any intertidal marsh or meadow habitat. This inconsistency should be explained.
- The amount of marine EFH impacted by Alternative F1 in the FEIS has been substantially reduced from the amount presented in Table 1-1 of the EFH Assessment in the DEIS. NMFS strongly supports this reduction in impact, but the text does not explain what was



done to bring about this change (e.g. a change in the placement of the bridge footings) Since the potential impacts from several of the other alternatives increased between the DEIS and the FEIS, we would be interested in knowing how the reduction was achieved.

- ADOT&PF is proposing in-lieu fee compensation for unavoidable impacts to wetlands and marine waters. FEIS Section 4.14.1.2, and the July 7, 2004 letter to the Army Corps of Engineers regarding compensation for impacts to wetlands, states that upland wetlands are generally abundant in the project area and because of the lack of development there are few options for wetland restoration and enhancement. NMFS generally agrees with this statement with regard to upland wetlands. However, as the Corps letter acknowledges, intertidal marshes and meadows are relatively rare in southeast Alaska and eelgrass is a habitat area of particular concern. NMFS has not seen evidence that in-lieu fee mitigation adequately compensates for the loss of these habitat types. Furthermore, one of the stated purposes of the Gravina Access project is to increase access to, and presumably development of, Gravina Island. This will result in additional loss of wetlands in the vicinity of the project.

Therefore, instead of in-lieu fee compensation, NMFS recommends that ADOT&PF consider options to acquire intertidal meadow/marsh and eelgrass areas that could be set aside for protection from future development. NMFS recommends that the compensation ratio for this mitigation be set at a minimum of 3 acres preserved for each acre impacted.

- Table 4-14 in the FEIS indicates that eelgrass is likely to be adversely affected by the preferred alternative, and it appears possible that potential impacts to estuarine habitat in Government Creek may also need to be added to the total impacted habitat. Under the Clean Water Act, eelgrass and intertidal meadows/marshes are special aquatic sites and therefore high value aquatic habitat. ADOT&PF is proposing an in-lieu fee of \$20,000 per acre for all marine habitat, which is the amount it has proposed under previous projects for moderate value intertidal rocky coastline habitats. High value aquatic habitat has previously been compensated for at \$50,000. per acre. If in-lieu fee mitigation is to occur, the fee should be \$50,000/acre for all eelgrass and intertidal meadows/marshes.

Please contact Katharine Miller at 907-586-7643 with questions or comments.

Sincerely,

DRAFT

Susan Kennedy
NEPA Coordinator

cc: Applicant



Southeast Alaska Conservation Council

SEACC 419 6th Street, Suite 200, Juneau, AK 99801

(907) 586-6942 phone • (907) 463-3312 fax

www.seacc.org • info@seacc.org

FAX COVER SHEET

RETURN FAX NUMBER: (907) 463-3312

DATE:

9/7/04

TO:

Jim Evensen

TO FAX #:

465-3506

NUMBER OF PAGES (INCLUDING THIS COVER SHEET):

20

FROM:

Emily Ferry

SUBJECT:

Gravina Access Project Comments

MESSAGE:



Southeast Alaska Conservation Council

SEACC 419 6th Street, Suite 200, Juneau, AK 99801

(907) 586-6942 phone • (907) 463-3312 fax

www.seacc.org • info@seacc.org

September 7, 2004

James A. Evensen, P.E., Project Manager
DOT&PF Southeast Region
6860 Glacier Highway
Juneau, AK 99801-7999
FAX: (907) 465-3506

Dear Mr. Evensen:

The following comments on the Gravina Access Project Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) are submitted on behalf of the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council (SEACC).

SEACC is a coalition of 18 volunteer citizen organizations based in 14 of Southeast Alaska communities, including the Ketchikan-based Tongass Conservation Society. SEACC's membership includes commercial fishermen, Alaska Natives, small-scale timber operators and value-added wood product manufacturers, tourism and recreation business owners, hunters and guides, and Alaskans from many other walks of life. We are dedicated to safeguarding the integrity of Southeast Alaska's unsurpassed natural environment while providing for the sustainable use of our region's resources.

The ability to move goods, services, and ourselves around Southeast Alaska has a huge impact on the economic, environmental, and social well-being of our region's communities. To this end, it is critical to develop sound transportation infrastructure. We do not believe, however, that the proposed Gravina Bridge is a sensible investment for the residents of Ketchikan, Alaskans, or the American tax-paying public. The proposed \$230 million bridge is an outrageous waste of federal funds that costs taxpayers as well as Alaskans in terms of lost opportunities. First, the money could be better invested in projects that serve a higher percentage of Alaskans and help to sustain existing communities. For example, the state could construct a mainline ferry and a smaller shuttle ferry to improve mobility among all thirty Alaska Marine Highway System dependent communities in Southeast, South Central, and Southwest Alaska for roughly the same price as the Gravina Bridge. Improving transportation for nearly a hundred thousand people is a better investment than pouring money into an arguably unnecessary bridge to serve the 12,000 residents of Ketchikan.

ALASKA SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FOREST DWELLERS, Point Baker • ALASKANS FOR JUNEAU • CHICAGO CONSERVATION COUNCIL, Tenakee
• FRIENDS OF BERNERS BAY, Juneau • FRIENDS OF GLACIER BAY, Gustavus • JUNEAU AUDUBON SOCIETY • JUNEAU GROUP SIERRA CLUB • LOWER CHATHAM CONSERVATION SOCIETY, Port Alexander • LYNN CANAL CONSERVATION, Haines • NARROWS CONSERVATION COALITION, Petersburg • LISIANSKI INLET RESOURCE COUNCIL, Pelican
• PRINCE OF WALES CONSERVATION LEAGUE, Craig • SITKA CONSERVATION SOCIETY • TONGASS CONSERVATION SOCIETY, Ketchikan • TAKU CONSERVATION SOCIETY, Juneau • WRANGELL RESOURCE COUNCIL • YAKUTAT RESOURCE CONSERVATION COUNCIL

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In addition to wasting federal funds, the proposed bridge also lays waste to Alaska's political capital. Right now we have a unique opportunity to make significant improvements to our state's transportation infrastructure with Congressman Don Young as chairman of the House Transportation Committee and Senator Ted Stevens as chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee. Already, the project has gained notoriety around the world as a taxpayer boondoggle. See news articles (attached as Exhibit 1). A reputation for wasteful spending will only hurt Alaska's legitimate requests for federal aid.

THE FEIS FAILS TO FULLY DISCLOSE THE COSTS AND BENEFITS OF THE ALTERNATIVES

It is unclear to the reader how much the preferred alternative will actually cost taxpayers. On page 2-8 of the FEIS, the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT) states that the cost of the preferred alternative is approximately \$190 million, yet Table 2-1 cites \$230 as the total cost for alternative F1. The table breaks down the costs between construction (\$170 million) and program development (\$60) million. So what is the total price taxpayers should expect to pay? Forty million dollars is an enormous difference in costs. It is nearly impossible for agencies or the public to weigh the costs and benefits of the proposed alternatives if the cost remains a widely ranging variable. Furthermore, if the state is not able to procure the funds for completion of the project, will we have half a bridge? DOT must clarify the predicted price of the project.

Under the Murkowski Administration, the DOT has continually attempted to paint the Alaska Marine Highway System as a money-loser by distorting the statistics comparing ferries to "hard links" such as roads and bridges. The Gravina Access FEIS is no exception. Here, DOT states that the annual average life-cycle operation and maintenance (O&M) costs for the city-run shuttle ferry is \$2.1 million. See FEIS at 2-4. After careful review of the FEIS, however, we could not determine whether DOT had incorporated the revenues brought in by the \$4 per ferry passenger into its calculations or not. The only reference to potential revenue from the ferry system in the FEIS is a general statement that reads, "recent fare increases might result in the ferry service becoming profitable in the future." *Id.* at 4-24. This general, non-specific, and one-sided analysis violates NEPA.

Furthermore, the Preliminary Quantities and Cost Estimate Technical Memorandum from July 2003 contained in Appendix A of the FEIS, fails to reference the No Action alternative as the baseline for the many cost estimate tables. The technical memorandum provides a theoretical analysis of the costs associated with each action alternative, but not the No Action alternative. DOT fails to disclose complete data related to the current costs and benefits of the existing ferry system in Appendix A. Consideration of this information is essential for a reasoned choice by the public and decisionmakers among this project's alternatives. DOT's failure to provide this essential information violates NEPA because it prevents a full comparison of all project alternatives and a reasonable evaluation of the conclusions reached by DOT's experts.

THE PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED IS UNCLEAR AND UNJUSTIFIED

One of the strongest arguments for the proposed bridge, as stated in the FEIS at 1-2, is "to improve the convenience and reliability of access to Ketchikan International Airport". Yet, Alaska's Congressman and bridge-supporter Don Young stated that to access the airport "it may actually be a little shorter (trip) for some people to use the ferry." See Ketchikan Daily News (Aug. 2, 2004)(attached as Exhibit 2). Representative Young also suggests in the same article that the ferry might remain in place. These statements from the project's primary Congressional promoter undermine one of the principal stated needs for this project.

According to the FEIS, one of the chief needs of the community is access to developable land away from waterfronts. "Without access to expansion areas, development will continue to crowd the waterfronts of Revillagigedo and Gravina Islands." See FEIS at 1-3. If this is the real issue, why didn't DOT consider alternatives building roads farther into Revillagigedo or Gravina Islands, rather than a bridge that only serves to connect the two waterfronts. DOT also states that it is likely that most of the island would be maintained as undeveloped lands because most of it is owned by the United States (Tongass National Forest land) and State of Alaska, instead of the Ketchikan Gateway Borough. See FEIS at 4-182. Furthermore, any development that does take place will likely occur along the eastern shoreline of the island, not inland.

It is questionable whether developable land is still a primary concern for the Ketchikan Gateway Borough. Rather than analyzing Ketchikan's current land use patterns and needs, DOT chose to rely on studies mostly done by the Ketchikan Gateway Borough planning department in the 1980s and '90s. Of the 13 studies or plans referenced, 11 of them were developed before the Ketchikan Pulp Company closed its doors in 1997, one was performed just a year after this dramatic change in the community's economy, and the final study has not even been completed. To satisfy NEPA, DOT must update the analysis of land needs before issuing the ROD. For example, along the existing road system several sites available for industrial development are the now vacant, including Ketchikan Pulp Corporation pulp mill site and the Gateway Veneer Plant at Ward Cove.

THE FEIS DOES NOT ADEQUATELY ADDRESS THE IMPACTS OF CUMULATIVE ACTIONS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

The FEIS explains that road access to properties held by various public and private agencies would enhance the opportunity for the landowners to sell or lease them. See FEIS at 1-3. These landowners include the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, University of Alaska, United States, State of Alaska, and private interests.

The FEIS identifies some but not all reasonably foreseeable actions in the FEIS. See FEIS at 4-181. For example, this section of the FEIS makes no mention of DNR's logging and roadbuilding plans on State land or the effects of those activities on island resources and users. See Office of the Governor, *State Help is on the Way for SE Timber Industry* (Au-

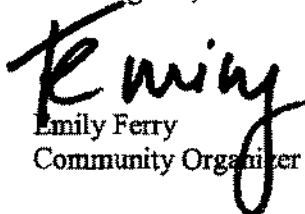
gust 13, 2004)(attached as Exhibit 3). Likewise, no mention is made of the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority's proposal to dispose of its timber on Gravina Island or the cumulative effect to the environment of this proposed action. See Public Notice of Decision to Dispose of Alaska Mental Health Trust Timber (March 13, 2004)(attached as Exhibit 4). The analysis given of those reasonably foreseeable actions identified by DOT, such as the Forest Service's Gravina Island Timber Sale, is too general and imprecise to satisfy the hard look requirement under NEPA.

In order to satisfy NEPA, an EIS must evaluate in detail the "cumulative effects of a proposed action with other proposed actions." See *Muckleshoot Indian Tribe v. U.S. Forest Service*, 177 F.3d (9th Cir 1999). The FEIS fails to adequately analyze cumulative and similar actions affecting lands within or adjacent to the Gravina Access project area. The DOT has not fulfilled its responsibility under NEPA to encourage and facilitate informed agency and public review of the Gravina Access project and other actual proposed projects that will have cumulatively significant impacts on the quality of the Gravina Island environment.

We also note our surprise when we realized the Forest Service was not a "cooperating agency" for this FEIS and had not submitted comments on the DEIS. Given that the Forest Service is the largest landowner on Gravina Island, and the direct, indirect and cumulative effect of any alternative considered in its timber sale planning process when combined with the proposed Gravina Access project and other reasonably foreseeable actions, the Forest Service should have been a cooperating agency in this NEPA process.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of these comments.

Best Regards,


Emily Ferry
Community Organizer

Attachments: exhibits 1 through 4

The New York Times

Built With Steel, Perhaps, but Greased With Pork

By TIMOTHY EGAN

Published: April 10, 2004

KETCHIKAN, Alaska, April 8 — Even by the standards of Alaska, the land where schemes and dreams come for new life, two bridges approved under the national highway bill passed by the House last week are monuments to the imagination.

One, here in Ketchikan, would be among the biggest in the United States: a mile long, with a top clearance of 200 feet from the water — 80 feet higher than the Brooklyn Bridge and just 20 feet short of the Golden Gate Bridge. It would connect this economically depressed, rain-soaked town of 7,845 people to an island that has about 50 residents and the area's airport, which offers six flights a day (a few more in summer). It could cost about \$200 million.

The other bridge would span an inlet for nearly two miles to tie Anchorage to a port that has a single regular tenant and almost no homes or businesses. It would cost up to \$2 billion.

These "bridges to nowhere," as critics have dubbed the two costliest of the high-priority projects in the six-year, \$275 billion House bill, are one reason Republicans are fighting among themselves in shaping the nation's transportation spending.

President Bush has threatened to use his first veto against any measure that emerges from a House-Senate conference with a cost of more than \$256 billion. (The Senate version, passed in February, calls for \$318 billion and includes neither of the projects, though their champion on Capitol Hill voices certainty that they will be added in conference.) Senator John McCain, Republican of Arizona, has described the legislation as so laden with pork as to betray the party's principles.

But if this is pork, the Republican behind the House bill says bring it on, with extra fat. Representative Don Young, Alaska's lone member of the House, where he is chairman of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, is already known as Mr. Concrete but would like to wear another title as well.

"I'd like to be a little oinker, myself," Mr. Young told a Republican lunch crowd here, taking mock offense at the suggestion that Ted Stevens, the Alaska Republican who is chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, directs more pork to their state than he does. "If he's the chief porker, I'm upset."

When asked why a town with one main road, a dwindling population and virtually nowhere to drive to needs a bridge to rival the world's great spans, people here inevitably respond with two words: Don Young. Mr. Young, mindful that the highway bill comes up for renewal only once every six years or so, and that the House Republican Conference imposes three-term limits on

committee chairmanships, says the opportunity to pour so many federal dollars into his home state comes once in a lifetime, and should be seized.

"If you don't do it now, when are you going to do it?" he said at the luncheon. "This is the time to take advantage of the position I'm in, along with Senator Stevens."

He said he would support an increase in the federal tax on gasoline — a "user fee," he called it — to pay for even more projects than were included in the newly passed bill.

People here in Ketchikan, in far southeastern Alaska off the coast of British Columbia, are grateful for Mr. Young's efforts, and they can certainly use the 600 or so jobs that a vast government works project would bring. A veneer mill, supported by \$17 million in federal aid, lies empty and rusting, in search of an owner. The town's biggest job provider, a pulp mill, shut down in 1997.

But as a transportation solution, the Ketchikan bridge is seen as something of a joke. It would replace a five-minute ferry crossing.

"Everyone knows it's just a boondoggle that we're getting because we have a powerful congressman," said Mike Sallee, 57, whose mother homesteaded here and who now runs a small timber operation. "That ferry of ours has been pretty darn reliable."

In public hearings on the bridge plan, officials heard few complaints about the ferry service. The ferry crosses every half-hour in winter and every 15 minutes in summer, when there are two boats available and a third on call. The crossing one day this week, from the time a visitor picked up his bags at the airport to his reaching town, took less than 10 minutes — and that included a wait for the ferry to arrive and dock at the island.

The Gravina Island Access Bridge, as the project is called, has been given a Golden Fleece award by Taxpayers for Common Sense, a budget watchdog based in Washington.

"It's a gold-plated bridge to nowhere," said Keith Ashdown, a spokesman for the group. "At a time when we have bridges and roads crumbling around the United States, and traffic congestion worse than ever, why build a \$200 million project that will serve only a few hundred people?"

Mr. Young, whose bill has broad bipartisan support, speaks with passion of how traffic congestion has robbed the average American of 68 hours a year in lost time. But he says taking care of Alaska is just as important.

"If I had not done fairly well for our state," he said, "I'd be ashamed of myself." As for the merits of the Ketchikan proposal, he said, "It's a bridge to somewhere." That somewhere is an island with a few miles of dirt roads, an unlogged sliver of the nation's biggest national forest. Mr. Young hopes the bridge will spur development in a part of Alaska where, though rain is measured by the foot (an average of more than 13 feet a year), cruise ships bring nearly a million tourists annually.

The nation's highway statute gets its money from a trust fund financed by the 18.4-cent-a-gallon federal tax that Americans pay on gasoline. Every time the legislation is renewed, lawmakers

load it with special projects for their districts, called earmarks. Alaskans get nearly \$7 back for every dollar they put into the fund.

In all, the current House bill would give Alaska \$540 million in earmarks, including down payments of \$120 million for the Ketchikan bridge and \$200 million for the one at Anchorage. Those two costs alone are more than the total for earmarked projects in all of 41 other states, according to an analysis by Taxpayers for Common Sense.

Mr. Young said Alaska had been late to the federal table — it did not join the Union until 1959 — and needed to play catch-up. With his position as chairman of the House transportation committee, and with Mr. Stevens driving appropriations in the Senate, the state can muscle through most of the road projects it dreams up, he said.

"It's not a good way to legislate, although I got a lot of stuff in it," Mr. Young told The Anchorage Daily News in December. "I mean I stuffed it like a turkey."

The bridge in Anchorage would cross Knik Arm, which is clogged by ice blocks the size of cars for much of the year, and connect the city to an undeveloped area around Port MacKenzie. In their proposal, state officials said it was needed for domestic security and to "coordinate operations" between the Port of Anchorage and the MacKenzie port, which has only one permanent tenant. Promoters of the bridge now say it is needed to stimulate housing and commercial development as well.

Here in Ketchikan, a simple bridge to the north of the one now envisioned would have spanned a gap of only a quarter-mile between the airport and town, and at only a fraction of the cost. But it was judged too close to the airport for pilot safety.

Another idea was a bridge with a clearance of 120 feet rather than the 200 now planned. But that would have forced cruise ships, the only growth industry in town, to take a different approach to port. After cruise lines threatened to cut some dockings, the most expensive design offered became the plan of choice.

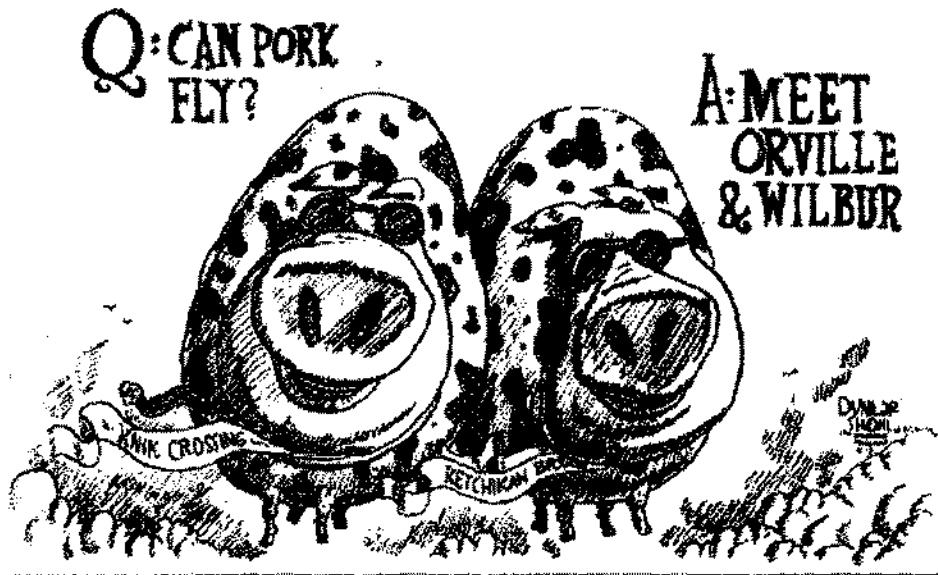
It calls for a span that will be longer than the George Washington Bridge, over the Hudson River, and will connect to Gravina Island through a middle island. Builders will be cutting into the flank of a mountain to anchor it.

Yet the bridge may make for a longer trip to the airport, people here say. Anyone driving from Ketchikan to catch a plane will have to head south of town, move past a main drag frequently clogged with tourists, ascend a mountain, cross the mile-long bridge westbound, then circle north around the back of Gravina Island to reach the airport. In addition, the airport will have to build a parking structure, at an estimated cost of \$11 million.

"The funny thing, when that big bridge is done, it will take more time to get to the airport than it does now on our little ferry," said Dale Collins, a mariner who heads the ship pilots association here. "But it sure will be big. It's unbelievable, the size of that bridge."

April 13, 2004

Anchorage Daily News



(By Peter Dunlap-Shohl)



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Hype & Glory

Walter Shapiro

The taxes we hate pay for our security

If you ventured near a mailbox or post office Thursday, did you notice any brass bands playing John Philip Sousa medleys or Irving Berlin's *God Bless America*?

Probably not, unless your community has a strangely affectionate attitude toward the IRS. Unlike any other patriotic date on the calendar, most Americans greet April 15 with the enthusiasm that a third-grader reserves for a summons to the principal's office. Filing an income-tax return is considered a grim obligation rather than an uplifting testament to the need for a democratic government to pay its bills.

Taxes, along with terrorism, are dominant debating points in the presidential campaign. But neither George W. Bush nor John Kerry spent Thursday warbling odes to the glories of Form 1040.

The president was in Iowa, for the second April 15 in three years. Iowa Republican Sen. Chuck Grassley, chairman of the Finance Committee, captured the mood by introducing Bush as the "Tax-cutter in chief of the United States."

Bush played on the anti-tax prejudice by joking, "It is nice of you to welcome somebody from the federal government on tax day." But mentioned only in passing in the president's remarks was the gaping federal budget deficit, projected by the Congressional Budget Office to reach \$477 billion this year.

For his part, Kerry went out of his way to affirm his solidarity with the middle class. The Kerry campaign issued a news release bragging that the Massachusetts senator's plan offers middle-income voters three times the tax relief as the president's latest proposals. Omitted in the comparison were the 2001 and 2003 Bush tax cuts, which Kerry vows to retain for households making less than \$200,000 a year.

This bipartisan imagery of hard-pressed working Americans struggling to meet their obligations to the IRS is a perennial of election-year politics. Not since Walter Mondale in 1984 has any presidential nominee had the moxie to proclaim his intention to raise taxes for most voters.

One secret of American politics is that the overall federal tax burden has lessened over the past quarter-century. The Congressional Budget Office earlier this month issued a study charting the average annual rate of taxes (both income taxes and payroll levies) paid by Americans in different economic groups from 1979 to 2001. In all cases, from the wealthiest 1% to the bottom 20%, the percentage of income paid in taxes declined during this period. And these CBO figures do not reflect the impact of the additional tax cuts that were enacted by Congress last year.

In truth, a case can be made that parts of the federal government are starved for revenue, and this has affected everything, even the struggle against terrorism.

USATODAY.com - The taxes we hate pay for our security

Page 2 of 2

During Tuesday's testimony before the commission investigating the roots of the Sept. 11 attacks, former CIA official Cofer Black described the spy agency's budget shortfall before 9/11 in stark, emotionally wrenching terms. As Black, who headed the CIA's counterterrorism center, put it: "Unfortunately, when Americans get killed, it would translate into additional revenues. It was a constant track: Either you run out (of money) or people die. When people die, you get more money."

Tight purse strings do not, in any way, excuse the intelligence and communication failures of the FBI and CIA in the months before Sept. 11. There has probably never been a federal bureaucrat in any agency from the FBI to the loneliest corridors of the Agriculture Department who did not hunger for a hefty budget increase. But it is difficult to deny that the austerity in many parts of the federal government since the days of Ronald Reagan has had real-world consequences.

The 2001 anthrax attacks underscored how ill-prepared the under-funded federal and state public-health system was to cope with an emergency, brought on by either bioterrorism or an epidemic. The anthrax scare belatedly produced a dramatic increase in public-health spending. But as the General Accounting Office, the non-partisan investigative arm of Congress, declared in a report issued last month, "No state is fully prepared to respond to a major public health threat."

The GAO has also assembled a devastating indictment of the federal government's seeming indifference to collecting unpaid taxes from both individuals and corporations. Summarizing its research at my request, the GAO calculates that as of Sept. 30, "the government had \$246 billion in cumulative outstanding taxes, penalties and interest owed but not collected." That is slightly more than half the estimated 2004 deficit.

Meanwhile, Congress continues to treat the federal budget as its own election-year slush fund. *The New York Times* recently detailed two difficult-to-defend Alaska projects buried in the \$275 billion, six-year highway bill approved by the House. One is a \$200 million bridge, just 20 feet shorter than the Golden Gate, that would connect the small town of Ketchikan with an island boasting 50 residents. The other is a \$2 billion bridge in Anchorage. It is, of course, coincidental that Alaska GOP Rep. Don Young chairs the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

Every tax dollar squandered by Congress, or uncollected by the federal government, means there are fewer resources available to perform vital functions. This is the sobering reality as another tax year fades into history and the federal government grapples with near-record deficits.

Walter Shapiro's column appears Wednesday and Friday. E-mail him at wshapiro@usatoday.com

Find this article at:

http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/columnist/shapiro/2004-04-15-hype_x.htm

☐ Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

May 26, 2004

Anchorage Daily News**Congressional delegation needs to work for projects Alaskans need**

As a resident of the Mat-Su area, I have been looking forward to the completion of the Glenn Highway overpass near Palmer for well over a year now.

Construction at the juncture of the Glenn and Parks has been slowing traffic since the project began, but folks in the Valley have been bearing with the inconvenience in the faith that the finished product will make travel to and from Anchorage easier and safer.

It irks me that this project -- along with scads of other meat-and-potatoes road repairs and upgrades throughout the state -- may now be delayed because Congress messed up ("Earmarks 'accident' hurts Alaska," May 24). It was bad enough watching Don Young waste his influence in Congress to secure earmarks for embarrassingly useless

boondoggles like the Gravina Bridge in Ketchikan. But it's even worse now that we know that the money for some of these pork projects may come out of Alaska's regular federal funding for transportation, and that basic road improvements in Anchorage and pending construction on the Glenn may have to wait as a result. This latest congressional mishap just goes to show that, instead of competing for the most pork, our delegation is better off finding funding for the projects that Alaskans really need.

-- John Fairfield

Palmer

April 26, 2004

Anchorage Daily News

Alaska politics is a house of cards, and it'll be stinky when it falls

Like father, like son: Le Fils Stevens is an arrogant, dictatorial, bullying chip off the old block. Let's not forget who put him there. Tony Knowles appointed him to fill Drue Pearce's seat when she went off to hack for Gale Norton. One has to wonder what sort of obsequious deal Knowles cut with Le Pere. Knowles must have known that Ben would not have any effective opposition when it came time to run, and indeed Ben ran unopposed in both the primary and general elections. Who is going to run against someone whose daddy has both his hands in the nation's till and who does not let anyone forget it? It is a stretch to claim that Ben was elected.

-- David McCargo

Anchorage

Whether it's Ted, Ben, Tony, Lisa, Don or Frank, Alaska politics is a sewer spewing out what one would expect. Some of these characters belong in The Simpsons. Who says one cannot fool most of the people most of the time? All that Alaskans seem to care about is being subsidized to plunder, ruin and waste. Between greed, deliberate ignorance and apathy, we have produced a political culture that ranks with some Third World countries. The paradox will be that when the house of cards collapses the great unwashed will blame their usual scapegoats, the environmentalists and the liberals.

April 25, 2004

Anchorage Daily News**Don Young's Alaska bridge projects are picking U.S. taxpayers' pockets**

Rep. Don Young's Ketchikan and Anchorage bridge projects may have value to the region's infrastructure; however, the price tag of \$2.2 billion is in no way justifiable. More to the point, the fact that every single American taxpayer is footing the bill for a project that will benefit a minute fraction of them is absurd.

And, while your readers may be thinking "mind your own business," this is my business: mine and every other American taxpayer's. Further, I would hope that Alaska citizens outraged at absurd pork barrel projects being foisted on the American public by a New York legislator would see fit to speak out about it.

There is no justification for Rep. Young picking the pockets of millions of

taxpayers. Economically, if he just handed \$200,000 to each of 500 construction workers it would cost roughly 2 percent of what he is spending. Politically, if this project guaranteed him the vote of every one of the citizens it directly affects (those who will benefit from short-term construction jobs and those who will use the bridges in the future), it would give him virtually no voter advantage.

This is hubris and egotism at its worst. Mr. Young is virtually stealing this money from the American people for one simple reason: because he can.

-- Dave Hammond

Floral Park, N.Y.

April 17, 2004

Anchorage Daily News

And you ask why we aren't liked ...

I just read your article about our Congressman Don Young and his pork bridges ("Powerful Alaska congressman proud of procuring pork," April 11). This is the reason people don't like our government.

-- Don Odegaard

Anchorage

April 17, 2004

Anchorage Daily News

All that pork Young boasts about will eventually starve our future

I was disgusted by the comments attributed to Rep. Don Young in the April 11 article "Powerful Alaska congressman proud of procuring pork."

While he may be proud of the "pork" he has provided to the state of Alaska, what does he have to say about the growth of federal debt during his tenure in office?

He, along with like-minded politicians from other states who borrow money from future taxpayers recklessly, doesn't deserve re-election.

-- *Peter Jensen*

Anchorage

KETCHIKAN DAILY NEWS

MONDAY, AUG. 2, 2004

KETCHIKAN, ALASKA

VOL. 76 NO. 179 (USPS 293-940)

Young: Gravina funding secure

By TOM MILLER

Daily News Staff Writer

Congressional negotiations on a massive, six-year federal transportation bill could be moving faster, U.S. Rep. Don Young, R-Alaska, said during a visit to Ketchikan Saturday.

"There are too many captains in the wheelhouse now. Which disturbs me a great deal, because, as an old riverboat captain, the best way you can get away from hitting the sandbar is to just have one pilot in the wheelhouse. But I've got the President, and I've got the Speaker, and I've got the majority leader, and I've got the Senate and I've got everybody in the wheelhouse."

The House version of the bill contains \$125 million for bridges linking Ketchikan with Gravina Island, but the money isn't in the Senate version. Young, the chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, said: "I think we've made good progress."

Earlier this year, President Bush wanted to spend no more than \$259 billion, he said. Now, the administration will agree to \$284 billion for obligated money and authority to contract for up to \$299 billion, Young said. He predicted that the bill, which is in a House-Senate conference committee, would become law before the November election.

"We've met four times. They've made an offer of \$318 (billion), which they can't justify or raise the money.



U.S. Rep. Don Young, R-Alaska, talked to reporters Saturday during a visit to Ketchikan.

Staff photo by Tom Miller

We can. We've showed them where we can get \$284 (billion), \$299 (billion). We can get that without raising the taxes. I want to raise the taxes. I do want a user fee. I've made no bones about it; I've been very upfront about it. But they've said, 'No,' ... so that's the highest I can get with the existing tax structure."

Regarding the Gravina bridge project, and the national and international publicity it received in recent months, Young said: "I'm not worried about an easy sell. I'm chairman of the committee, and we'll have the money for that bridge — I mean, if we have a bill.

See 'Young,' page 3

Young

"But the reality is, the criticism comes from people who would be the first ones that, if you check back in history, have lined their streets with gold. And because I want to do it now, it's the wrong thing to do.

"This is a bridge to somewhere. It does have people over there. It will be extremely economically valuable to this gateway city. And without it, you know, Ketchikan's going to have a tough time. But with that opening up, you get more building space, more residential land available, state-owned land ... I believe it's going to be a great access, economically. You can't do it running that ferry back and forth."

And the ferry might remain in place, said Young.

"It may actually be a little shorter [trip] for some people to use the ferry. But, to build an economic base, you've got to have access to a body of land and connect these two areas."

Other bridge projects have also been called "a bridge to nowhere," as the Gravina project has been dubbed by critics, said Young.

Sitka and Kodiak are examples, he said, of places where bridges provided access and allowed many worthwhile developments on formerly unused land.

"In fact, I was just reading about the Chesapeake Bay Bridge, which was built in 1952 for \$400 million. And it said there that it was 'the bridge to nowhere.' And yet, you see what's happened on the eastern shore and the whole development of Ocean City; it's awesome. ... It is the largest economic boost that that area has ever had."

Congress is in recess until Sept. 6. Young is traveling in the state with six other members of Congress. The group was to travel to Anchorage Sunday, followed by visits to Kodiak, Fairbanks and Seward, he said.

Young, a member of the House Committee on Resources, said he hopes Congress will appropriate money to the U.S. Forest Service to build logging roads in the Tongass National Forest.

"I'm just trying to keep Seley's [Pacific Log and Lumber] mill alive, and I think we have three mills left in this area. And we're only cutting less than 150 million board feet a year, and it's just right to have that group of entrepreneurs provide some real jobs that make money off the resources of this area.

"The idea that this old, dead forest, which we have, is not being accessible and used has been against my

grain from the very get-go. And these guys who can argue with me and say 'He's out of step, he doesn't understand the environment' — nonsense.

"Other countries have forests, as you know. Sweden still cuts more timber than we do, nationwide, and they don't have the forest fires that we do, and they've done it for thousands of years, because they manage their timber. And that's what we ought to be doing. But we've got so much, so easy, we'd rather buy it from Canada, instead of using our own timber and that's just dead wrong."

Ketchikan won't have a pulp mill again in the foreseeable future, as it had from the mid 1950s through 1997, said Young.

"But someday, they'll look around and say, 'What were we thinking?'"

Regarding the recently released 9-11 Commission report, Young said he has urged everyone concerned to not panic.

"I don't want us to jump into this thing and do something in a rash [way] to try to appease the political outcry and the writing of the media that we're not doing anything. We've had a tremendous amount of hearings already in our committee about security, especially airport security.

We've gone through this process. The administration has done pretty well, and I'm just saying, we're now in the process of studying what the commission recommended."

Young said there will be 26 Congressional hearings on security in the next month. "What are we trying to do? Out-hear one another?"

Asked about his plans, Young said he hopes to be re-elected to the House this year and again in 2006. He might seek election to become Speaker of the House, he said, but added, "The leadership doesn't want me running around loose."

One of the House members traveling with Young, Rep. Dan Burton, R-Indiana, said any concern that Young is a "loose cannon" may be set aside: "I think he is one of the most effective members of Congress," Burton said. "Don is a very down-to-earth fellow and what he says, he means. He's got a cheerful countenance about him, and I think everybody that knows him in Congress — and I've known Don for 22 years — respects him and knows that when he says something, he means what he says. And I think that's very important."

Email: tommiller@ketchikandailynews.com

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Governor Murkowski

News & Announcements

State of Alaska > Governor > News > News Details

State Help on the Way for SE Timber Industry

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 13, 2004 No. 04-210

State Help on the Way for Southeast Timber Industry Jobs

(Ketchikan) - Three small Southeast Alaska sawmills financially hamstrung by the resistance of environmental special interest groups to logging on federal land will get some relief this year, as Governor Frank Murkowski announced a plan today to make state timber sales available for the mills to help protect Alaska jobs.

"We are determined to get a long-term solution to the timber industry's supply problems by using U.S. Forest Service timber to supply our Southeast mills," said the Governor. "But we need to help the mills survive until then. Ongoing litigation by environmental groups is tying up the timber the mills need and depriving the Southeast economy of these critical jobs. Greenpeace and other environmental groups have been trying for 25 years to put Alaska's timber industry out of business, but I'm not going to let that happen."

Under the plan, the state will first provide state timber sales for the Pacific Log & Lumber sawmill in Ketchikan and the Silver Bay Logging sawmill in Wrangell over the next year. The state will also provide the Viking sawmill in Klawock with 15 million board feet of state timber over the next four years.

To further expand potential timber supplies, the state will also encourage the Mental Health Trust to make timber on its land in the region available in sales for which local mills could compete. Finally, the Governor has committed the state to work with the sawmills to find uses for sawdust and bark generated as byproducts of mill operations.

The Forest Service has agreed to help by putting up federal timber sales near state sales and cooperating on a joint road agreement on Gravina Island. Forest Service timber, much of it currently tied up in court, should again be available in sufficient quantities to supply the mills in the summer of 2005, the Governor said.

"The state will do what it takes to help keep this industry alive," said the Governor. "From intervening on behalf of the Forest Service to defend timber sales in court from environmental special interest groups, to putting up our own timber for sale, this administration is going to support Alaska jobs. We can have a sustainable timber industry and a healthy environment. Those trying to put these mills out of business with endless and unnecessary litigation do not have the best interest of the people of Southeast Alaska at heart."

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Becky Hultberg Press Secretary, 465-3995

Email Governor Frank H. Murkowski, mail or call:
Office of the Governor Box 110001 Juneau, AK 99811 907.465.3500 465.3532 fax

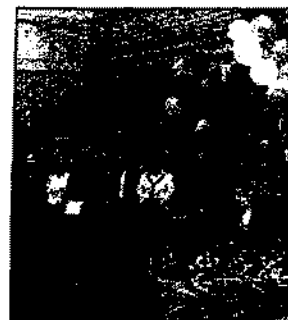


Photo archive: Hailing Alaska into the 21st century of comm travel, Gov. Frank Murkowski open the new Concourse C a Stevens Anchorage International Airport on June 29. The governor the ultra-modern 447,000 square facility demonstrates how important Alaska's transportation system the world, and how important to Alaskans. Murkowski spoke dignitaries Sen. Ted Stevens, Don Young, U.S. Transportation Secretary Norm Mineta, Airport Director Mort Plumb and many hundreds of Alaskans eager to experience the new concourse. [Enlarge >](#)

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State of Alaska Public Notice

Page 1 of 2

[Home](#)

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Online Public Notice

State of Alaska

Public Notices Decision To Dispose Of Alaska Mental Health Trust Timber

Submitted by: Juanita DeRose/OOC/DNR

Date Submitted: 03/10/2004 04:25 PM

Date Modified:

Ak Admin Journal: [not printed]

Attachments: No files attached

Decision To Dispose Of Alaska Mental Health Trust Timber

Category: Public Notices
Publish Date: 03/13/2004

Department: Natural Resources
Location: Ketchikan
Coastal District: N/A

Body of Notice:

ALASKA MENTAL HEALTH TRUST LAND OFFICE
STATE OF ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Public Notice under 11 AAC 99.050
Decision to Dispose of Alaska Mental Health Trust Timber
near Ketchikan, Alaska
Under AS 38.05.801 and 11 AAC 99

Pursuant to the provisions of AS 38.05.801 and 11 AAC 99, the Executive Director of the Alaska Mental Health Trust Land Office (TLO) has determined that it is in the best interest of the Alaska Mental Health Trust and its beneficiaries to dispose of approximately 90 million board feet of Alaska Mental Health Trust timber located in the vicinity of Ketchikan, Alaska including Trust timber at Leask Lake, Ward Cove and Gravina Island. The reasons for this determination are explained in a written best interest decision, prepared by the Executive Director pursuant to 11 AAC 99.040. Disposal will take place through specific timber sale offerings at future dates.

The Trust land subject to this decision is located in the Ketchikan area, within various sections in the following townships: Township 73 South, Range 91 East, Township 74 South, Range 90 East, Township 75 South, Range 90 East, and Township 75 South, Range 91 East, Copper River Meridian.

The public is invited to comment on this proposed action. Parties wishing to comment on the written decision or parties that believe that the written decision should be altered due to an inconsistency with Trust management principles, or any other provision of 11 AAC 99, must provide written comments on or before 2:00 pm on April 14, 2004. Following the comment deadline, all timely written responses will be considered and the Executive Director's best interest decision may be changed in response to such comments. If no significant comments are received the TLO will proceed with the intended action without further notice.

To be eligible to file for reconsideration or subsequent appeal to the Superior Court, parties must have submitted written comments during the public notice period. Commenting parties will be provided a copy of the final best interest decision. Eligible parties will then be given twenty (20) calendar days after receipt of the final decision to request that the Executive Director reconsider the decision under 11 AAC 99.060(b).

Copies of the written decision are available at the Alaska Mental Health Trust Land Office, Department of Natural Resources, 718 L Street, Suite 202, Anchorage, Alaska, 99501, phone: (907-269-8658). If you have any questions concerning this action, please contact Doug Campbell at: (907) 269-8658.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Alaska Mental Health Trust is prepared to accommodate

Exhibit 4

Subject: Gravina access
From: "Rice, Peter (MD)" <PRice@peacehealth.org>
Date: Tue, 07 Sep 2004 21:12:19 -0800
To: james_evensen@dot.state.ak.us

Sirs,

I would like to enter my comments into the record. I am against the bridge solution to Gravina Access at this time. I think a better solution is to enhance the current ferry service, and to expedite development of the road system on Gravina. The current proposal is too expensive to both federal and state budgets for the proposed benefits, especially the current budget crises.

Sincerely

Rice

Pond Reef Road

Ketchikan, AK 99901

Peter

1395

This message is intended solely for the use of the individual and entity to whom it is addressed, and may contain information that is privileged, confidential, and exempt from disclosure under applicable state and federal laws. If you are not the addressee, or are not authorized to receive for the intended addressee, you are hereby notified that you may not use, copy, distribute, or disclose to anyone this message or the information contained herein. If you have received this message in error, immediately advise the sender by reply email and destroy this message.

Subject: FW: Hovik-Gravina Island Website Feedback
From: "Thompson, Dina L." <Dina.Thompson@hdrinc.com>
Date: Thu, 09 Sep 2004 16:19:57 -0500
To: james_evensen@dot.state.ak.us

-----Original Message-----

From: Gravina FeedBack [mailto:Gravina@hdrinc.com]
Sent: Tuesday, September 07, 2004 11:27 PM
To: Dalton, Mark; Jim Evensen; Maines, Kristen; Smith, David B
Subject: Gravina Island Website Feedback

This person requested a response

Name: Paul Hovik
Phone:
Email: pennock5@ptialaska.net
Comment: I submit the following comments for the public record:

After all impacts are considered, the only reasonable alternative is the "No-Build" Alternative; State DOT said as much when it originally rejected F1 in 2002 - the economic unfeasibility of F1 made choosing it tantamount to choosing the "No-Build" option. Nothing has fundamentally changed since then. In fact, choosing any alternative but the "No-Build" Alternative would expose the EIS process as a sham.

To say that bridging Pennock and Gravina to Revillagigedo Island is problematic is hyperbole - it would create many more problems than it would solve, and saddle an already-hurting community with a maintenance nightmare.

Logistically, the F1 option would ironically make the airport less, not more, accessible - it would more than double the commute time from North Tongass and Pennock, exacerbate downtown traffic, and close the airport in times of high wind, ice, and/or snow. The State cut Tongass snow removal to one truck last year. At least with the existing ferry snow-removal is not an issue. This cost savings needs to be factored into any cost-benefit analysis since it strongly favors the status quo.

Economically, building F1 would have numerous foreseen and countless unforeseen negative consequences. The Cruise ship industry has already registered its opposition; several air taxis would most likely have to relocate - especially with our abundance of sub-vfr-minima weather; the existing ferry infrastructure would have to be maintained as a backup; roaded connection would increase security risks at the airport, etc.

No studies have been done regarding the carrying capacity for vehicles on Revilla Island, but it is safe to say there is an inversely-proportional relationship between the number of cars in the community, and the quality of life here; we are already bumping up against the optimum carrying capacity, I would argue - to add road would create a domino effect: more people-more homes-more cars- more time sitting in bumper-to-bumper traffic on Tongass Avenue.

It is high time the State of Alaska and the Alaskan Congressional Delegation stop wasting precious public tax dollars promoting this ill-thought-out bridge. The seven million dollars already spent could've built much-needed sports facilities, like an indoor soccer field or a new pool. Wasting the public's money is malfeasance and should be prosecuted for the crime that it is. We have been fighting against this boondoggle bridge idea for nearly thirty years - it is time to kill it once and for all.

The existing ferry service to the airport is not only adequate, it is unique - part of the character that people pay to come to visit. Destroy the character, destroy the charm, and you destroy the community, bit

by bit. Soon, you have just another "down-south" town - nothing special, nothing different. We must actively preserve our difference if we aim to capitalize upon it.



August 31, 2004

DOT&PF Project Manager
Jim Evensen, P.E.
DOT&PF Southeast region
6860 Glacier Highway
Juneau, AK 99801-7999

Re: Gravina Bridge Project

Dear Mr. Evensen.

As a longtime resident of Ketchikan (I became a Pioneer last year!) the purpose of this letter is to lodge my personal protest concerning the proposed Gravina Bridge project.

A bridge to Gravina? I believed this to be a ridiculous notion when first it was proposed and was outraged when endorsed and promoted by the Alaska delegaton. The thought of spending more than 200 million dollars on a bridge to ostensibly service a population of 14,000 was and is the purest form of pork barrel politics.

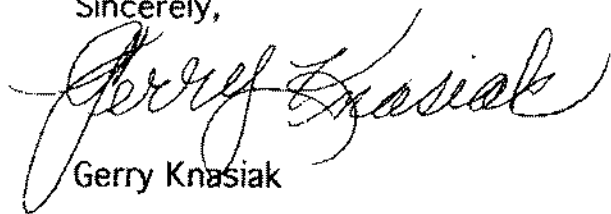
The dimensions are staggering! Barely 20 feet shorter than the Golden Gate Bridge and 80 feet higher than the Brooklyn Bridge! Little wonder that the news has made Alaska the object of ridicule in the mainstream media and overseas as well. Criticism of the project has come from all directions, congressional representatives and a number of groups whose primary

Or, you might say, take the airporter. Well, consider that that means of transportation now costs about \$18.00 for a one-way trip. I imagine that fare would increase considerably given the greater distance one would have to travel. All in all it is an added expense. Incidentally, that \$18.00 cost is for one passenger. If a family travels it might break the budget with a resounding crack!

The funding process for the bridge would take more time at the moment and its nebulous outcome is known to you so I'll not go into it. Suffice to say, for the reasons outlined above, I say a resounding NO to the Gravina Bridge Project!

The funding process for the bridge would take more time at the moment and its nebulous outcome is known to you so I'll not go into it. Suffice to say, for the reasons outlined above, I say a resounding NO to the Gravina Bridge Project!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gerry Knasiak". The signature is fluid and stylized, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Gerry Knasiak

119 Austin St. #611
Ketchikan, AK 99901

Subject: FW: Scott-Gravina Island Website Feedback
From: "Thompson, Dina L." <Dina.Thompson@hdrinc.com>
Date: Thu, 09 Sep 2004 16:34:23 -0500
To: james_evensen@dot.state.ak.us

-----Original Message-----

From: Dalton, Mark
Sent: Tuesday, September 07, 2004 3:59 PM
To: Thompson, Dina L.; Snead, Carol V
Cc: Maines, Kristen
Subject: FW: Gravina Island Website Feedback

-----Original Message-----

From: Gravina FeedBack [mailto:Gravina@hdrinc.com]
Sent: Tuesday, September 07, 2004 3:56 PM
To: Dalton, Mark; Jim Evensen; Maines, Kristen; Smith, David B
Subject: Gravina Island Website Feedback

No response necessary

Name: Marvin Scott
Phone: 907-247-5178
Email: marvinlscott@yahoo.com

Comment: I have been a resident of Ketchikan my whole life. I personally find my home the most beautiful town in Alaska. The Tongass Narrows is in the minds and hearts of all Ketchikan residents. I find one of the most unique characteristics is that what we look at every day has yet to be clear-cut. The center of our community is still uninterrupted rain forest. I value this untouched wilderness more than anything involving the town of Ketchikan. I know that building a bridge to Gravina will provide special interests, such as Mental Health Land Trust, easier access to commercial logging on the island of Gravina. This will be far more detrimental to our community than any positive aspects that would be gained by building the bridge. Within your EIS you state an objective of the Pennock and Gravina Island Neighborhood Plan was to develop a transportation plan that would provide access to interior land without compromising the qualities that attracted residents to the area. If you build this bridge you will compromise this for me and every other resident whose view of our world will be permanently affected. I see your No Action Alternative as the only realistic alternative.

I agree with making a better ferry system to access the island. It provides permanent local jobs, and the money previously reserved for the bridge would likely fund a reliable ferry that could be offered to the residents of this island at no cost, just as the bridge would be. An action such as this would truly serve the people of this community.

I am in agreement with better access to Gravina Island by ferry, but not by a bridge.

I believe in projects that enhance the quality of life among the people whom live in this community.

I ask you not to build the bridge.

Thank You
Marvin Scott